

neighborhood. And to this end, the United States will not only push for the free trade agreement of the Americas; we will continue trade agreements with countries like Chile—we just concluded one with Chile—but with the Central American countries, Andean countries. We believe in trade. We believe it's in the interest of the neighborhood that we trade freely.

Paul O'Neill

Q. Thank you, President Fox. President Bush, is it true, as your former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill says, that you started planning for the invasion of Iraq within days of your inauguration? Do you feel betrayed? And should he have released those documents?

President Bush. First, let me say I appreciate former Secretary O'Neill's service to our country. We worked together during some difficult times. We worked together when the country was in recession, and now we're coming out of recession, which is positive news. We worked together when America was attacked on September the 11th, which changed how I viewed the world. September the 11th made me realize that America was no longer protected by oceans and we had to take threats very seriously, no matter where they may be materializing.

And no, the stated policy of my administration towards Saddam Hussein was very clear. Like the previous administration, we were for regime change. And in the initial stages of the administration, as you might remember, we were dealing with Desert Badger or fly-overs and fly-betweens and looks, and so we were fashioning policy along those lines. And then, all of a sudden, September the 11th hit. And as the President of the United States, my most solemn obligation is to protect the security of the American people. That's my—to me that's the most solemn thing an American President or any President must do. And I took that duty very seriously.

And as you know, not only did we deal with the Taliban, we gave—working through the United Nations and working through international community, we made it clear that Saddam Hussein should disarm. And like he had done with a lot of previous resolu-

tions, he ignored the world's demands. And now he's no longer in power, and the world is better for it. The Iraqi people are better for it; America is better for it; Mexico is better for it. The world is more peaceful as a result of Saddam Hussein not being in power.

And the task at hand, Mr. President—and he and I—he knows this fully well—is to make sure that the aspirations of the Iraqi people are allowed to flourish. And we'll get there. It's a tough task right now. It's hard work, but we've done hard work in the past. And a free Iraq is going to be in the world's interest.

Thank you very much.

President Fox. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:12 p.m. at the Quinta Real Hotel. President Fox and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Marta Sahagun de Fox, wife of President Fox; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Ricardo Lagos of Chile in Monterrey

January 12, 2004

President Bush. Listen, I'm honored to be here with *el Presidente de Chile*, Ricardo Lagos. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership and friendship. We have had a very close working relationship. And the people of the world should take notice of the fact that Chile and America negotiated and finalized a free trade agreement, a free trade agreement which is in the interests of the people of America and the people of Chile. It's an example of the bilateral trade relationships that my Government thinks is important.

But beyond that, we've got a relationship based upon shared values. The President is a strong leader who believes in human dignity and human rights and in freedom. And for that, Mr. President, I'm grateful for your strong voice here in our neighborhood. It's

good to see you again, sir. Thank you. You're looking good these days.

[At this point, President Lagos spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English.]

President Lagos. Your Spanish is improving. *[Laughter]*

President Bush. Thank you. I appreciate that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. at the InterContinental Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership With India *January 12, 2004*

In November 2001, Prime Minister Vajpayee and I committed our countries to a strategic partnership. Since then, our two countries have strengthened bilateral cooperation significantly in several areas. Today we announce the next steps in implementing our shared vision.

The United States and India agree to expand cooperation in three specific areas: civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, and high-technology trade. In addition, we agree to expand our dialog on missile defense. Cooperation in these areas will deepen the ties of commerce and friendship between our two nations and will increase stability in Asia and beyond.

The proposed cooperation will progress through a series of reciprocal steps that will build on each other. It will include expanded engagement on nuclear regulatory and safety issues and missile defense, ways to enhance cooperation in peaceful uses of space technology, and steps to create the appropriate environment for successful high-technology commerce. In order to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, relevant laws, regulations, and procedures will be strengthened, and measures to increase bilateral and international cooperation in this area will be employed. These cooperative efforts will be undertaken in accordance with our respective national laws and international obligations.

The expanded cooperation launched today is an important milestone in transforming the relationship between the United States and India. That relationship is based increasingly on common values and common interests. We are working together to promote global peace and prosperity. We are partners in the war on terrorism, and we are partners in controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them.

The vision of U.S.-India strategic partnership that Prime Minister Vajpayee and I share is now becoming a reality.

Proclamation 7750—To Suspend Entry as Immigrants or Nonimmigrants of Persons Engaged In or Benefiting From Corruption *January 12, 2004*

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In light of the importance of legitimate and transparent public institutions to world stability, peace, and development, and the serious negative effects that corruption of public institutions has on the United States efforts to promote security and to strengthen democratic institutions and free market systems, and in light of the importance to the United States and the international community of fighting corruption, as evidenced by the Third Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity and other intergovernmental efforts, I have determined that it is in the interests of the United States to take action to restrict the international travel and to suspend the entry into the United States, as immigrants or nonimmigrants, of certain persons who have committed, participated in, or are beneficiaries of corruption in the performance of public functions where that corruption has serious adverse effects on international activity of U.S. businesses, U.S. foreign assistance goals, the security of the United States against transnational crime and terrorism, or the stability of democratic institutions and nations.